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Defending images in Pecock's *Repressor: caritas*, the absent friend and the sense of touch

Thow shalt loue the Lord thi God of al thin herte, and of al thi soule, and of alle thi strengthis.¹

Deut. 6.5

In Part One of the *Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy* (c. 1449), Reginald Pecock outlines in detail the foundations on which his defence of orthodox practices against Lollard attack will be built. The last of these foundations, which he terms 'general profis', is comprised of three rules from which he draws four conclusions.² The first is grounded in the biblical commandment of *caritas*, first articulated in the Pentateuch but established as the Great Commandment in the New Testament, that a man should (in Pecock's modified rendering) 'loue God and drede God

My thanks to the anonymous readers for *SAC*, and to Sebastian Sobecki and Sarah Salih for their careful readings of this essay; to Eva von Contzen for guidance on translations from Latin; and to audiences at Cornell, Oxford and Cambridge whose comments have been valuable in shaping my argument.

¹ *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850).

² Reginald Pecock, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. Churchill Babington, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 19 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860; Kraus Reprint, 1966), p. 110.

with al his herte, soul, and strengthe'.³ The second conclusion is that a man 'must bithinke and remembre' seven matters: who God is; the 'benefetis' He gives to man; the punishments He dispenses; the articles of His law and service; how man should serve God in these points; man's natural frailty and disposition to sin; the sins and their remedies. The third conclusion is that active knowledge of these seven matters is a prerequisite for the first:

the remembraunce and mynde taking upon these vij. maters is so necessarie a meene into the loue and drede of God, that withoute meditacioun and mynde vpon hem or upon summe of hem no man schal loue God and drede God in eny while with al his herte, soule, and strengthe.⁴

A man cannot love God 'with al his herte, soule, and strengthe', so the syllogism demonstrates, without having in mind some part of the knowledge of Him encompassed in those 'vij. maters'. This command to love God thus requires a knowledge of Him that is hard work to obtain, not least because God is materially absent. In the *Repressor*, Pecoock argues that the particular difficulty of knowing God in order to love Him can be overcome through the dual labours of learning and recollection. But such is man's natural frailty that he cannot recall and keep in mind these matters without the help of the following 'weies or meenes': reading or hearing Scripture and other writings; hearing sermons; 'biholding upon picturis or purtraturis or graued werk or coruun [carven] werk'; and visiting places where holy men did or do dwell, or where their relics and 'relifis [remains]' are housed.⁵ The fourth conclusion is thus that the problems of God's absence and man's forgetfulness are partly counteracted not only through teaching and the written word, but also through physical actions and material objects that mediate, or become proxies for, forms of presence. The efficacy of these means is predicated on an understanding of the reliance of human cognition on sensory perception. Pilgrimages, sacred relics and images (paintings,

³ *Repressor*, pp. 113-14. Pecoock offers a subtle rewriting of scriptural authority here by combining the injunction to 'drede God' with the command to love Him.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵ *Ibid.*

portraits, engravings, sculptures) – though highly suspect to Lollards – are all, Pecock posits, tools key to the work of learning and remembrance that generates the knowledge of God necessary to obey the greatest biblical commandment.⁶ As such, they operate not only through an appeal to sight, but also, as this essay explores, to the sense of touch.

The algorithm of knowledge, remembrance and love, upon which the *Repressor's* arguments against Lollardy rest, is also the explicit foundation of a number of Pecock's surviving works that have the broader aim of offering orthodox instruction in the vernacular for laity and clergy alike (*The Donet*, 1443-49, *The Reule of Crysten Religioun*, 1443 and *The Folewer to the Donet*, 1453-54).⁷ Since, as the *Reule* makes clear, 'love may not be had anentis [towards] eny persooone wiþoute knowing had afore vpoun þe same persooone', Pecock's works systematically tabulate and categorise the knowledge necessary to know God in order to love Him.⁸ In these works (though not explicitly in the *Repressor*), the Christian imperative to love God, but also, *per* the second part of the commandment of *caritas*, to love one's neighbour as one's self, is expressed as friendship and the kind of love required as 'freendful' or 'freendly'.⁹ Charity itself is defined as 'not ellis þanne an habit or a dede of freendly louyng to god, or a wel willing to god aboute alle þingis, and to alle opire resonable and sauable creaturis in god and for god'.¹⁰ Pecock's thinking

⁶ This claim is repeated elsewhere in Pecock's works. See, for example, Reginald Pecock, *The Reule of Crysten Religioun*, ed. William Cabell Greet, EETS o.s. 171 (London: Oxford University Press, 1927; Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1987), p. 244.

⁷ Two other works survive, *Poore Mennis Myrror* (c. 1443-49) and *The Book of Faith* (c. 1456). On Pecock's target audience in his works, see further Mishtooni Bose, 'Religious Authority and Dissent', *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 40-55.

⁸ *Reule*, p. 2. *The Donet*, for example, organises the knowledge necessary for Christian life into four tables, explicitly related to the strands of the commandment to love God, neighbour and self. See further Kirsty Campbell, *The Call to Read: Reginald Pecock's Books and Textual Communities* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), for outlines of the various modes of categorisation employed across Pecock's works, e.g. p. 22.

⁹ The instances are numerous. See Reginald Pecock, *The Donet*, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS o.s. 156 (London: Oxford University Press, 1921; New York: Kraus Reprint, 1971), e.g. pp. 28, 34, 36, 37, 42, etc. For the *Reule*, see for example, pp. 239, 241, 242, 496, etc.

¹⁰ *Donet*, p. 109.

thus follows Thomas Aquinas who influentially expounds charity in the *Summa theologiae*, in a thoroughly Aristotelianised understanding, as ‘a friendship of man and God’.¹¹

The requirements of *caritas* thus to some extent underpin Pecock’s entire literary project, and its expression as friendship is central to works like the *Donet*, the *Folewer* and the *Reule*.¹² While the paradigm of friendship for *caritas* is left largely implicit in the *Repressor*, it surfaces compellingly in his defence of images. Pecock’s long discussion of images in the *Repressor* culminates in the idea of Christ as an absent friend, an image of whom offers the Christian a form of presence essential to meeting the difficult demands of charity.¹³ Pecock sets out the argument thus:

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, gen. ed. Thomas Gilby, 60 vols. (London: Blackfrairs, 1975), 2a2æ.23, 1 (XXXIV, 6-7). Thomas deals with the theological virtue of charity as friendship extensively in 2a2æ, questions 23 through 46, where, as the translator notes, he understands charity as ‘whole-hearted love of God’ that includes love of self and neighbour as set out in the biblical commandments (p. xvii). Nathan Leffler gives a thoroughgoing account of Thomas’s theology of friendship and its debt to Aristotle in *Theologizing Friendship: How Amicitia in the Thought of Aelred and Aquinas Inscriptes the Scholastic Turn* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014). On the influence of Thomas on Pecock, see further Campbell, *The Call to Read*, e.g. pp. 12-13 and Chapter Five. See also, Mishtooni Bose, ‘Two Phases of Scholastic Self-Consciousness: Reflections on Method in Aquinas and Pecock’, *Aquinas as Authority*, ed. P. J. J. van Geest (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), pp. 87-107.

¹² As Pecock explains in the *Donet*, Christ’s ‘two tables’ are three-fold, defining an ethics of love towards God, self and neighbour. Fulfilment of the command in these three areas means the ‘remenaunt’ of God’s law will also be fulfilled, p. 17 (cf. *Reule*, e.g. p. 240). It is this three-fold application of Christ’s commandments that governs Pecock’s categorisation of the whole of God’s law into three tables understood to encapsulate all ‘eendal’ moral virtues. A fourth table (placed first) contains the ‘meenal’ virtues. These ‘meenal’ virtues accord with the seven matters that the *Repressor* and the *Reule* set out as the means to fulfilling the commandment to love wholeheartedly; these seven matters, in turn, can be reduced to Christ’s two tables and are comprehended fully in Pecock’s four tables. These four tables are intended to encapsulate and ultimately replace the existing multiple tabulations relating to God’s law, such as the Decalogue, the cardinal virtues, the seven deadly sins, and so on. The *Donet* lays out the four tables; the *Folewer*, intended as an extension of the *Donet*, gives an extended justification of the four tables in Part 2. Both the seven matters and the four tables will teach that God is worthy to be loved with the love of friendship above all others, and instruct how to love God, self and neighbour with the pure love of friendship. See, for examples, *Reule*, p. 239; *The Folewer to the Donet*, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS o.s. 164 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924, Kraus reprint, 1981), p. 194, etc.

¹³ The analysis of this episode in this essay builds substantially on my earlier discussion made in ‘Reading Without Books’, *Spaces for Reading in Later Medieval England*, ed. Mary C. Flannery and Carrie Griffin (New York: Palgrave, 2016), pp. 115-31.

Ech man hath nede forto haue gode affeccious anentis [towards] Crist, as upon his best freend; and this freend zeueth [gives] not to us his presence visibili; wherfore it is profitable to ech man for to ymagine this freend be present to us bodili and in a maner visibili. And sithen herto serueth ful weel and ful myche the ymage of Crist crucified.¹⁴

The need for love ('gode affeccious') for Christ the friend is potentially compromised by the absence of presence, that is, by the absence of sensibles: 'this freend zeueth not to us his presence visibili'. An imagined image, supported by a physical 'ymage of Crist crucified', however, can serve to mediate friendship with Christ. The underlying logic here follows that of the 'general profis' of Part 1, which establish images as one of the 'meenes' or instruments through which a man is able to recollect the knowledge required to obey the commandment to 'loue thi Lord God of al thin herte'. As I suggest in this essay, Pecock's use of the figure of Christ as friend in his defence of images is the logical extension of an Aristotelianised understanding, worked out across his corpus, of the command to love God. But so too is it rooted in an Aristotelianised theory of the operation of the imagination and of sensory perception, and of their key roles in mitigating absence and mediating presence. Together, Aristotelian theories of friendship and of sensory perception provide Pecock with his most affectively charged arguments as to why Christians need images.

Pecock's broader defence of images is thus framed with a particular set of concerns: the human desire for presence and the problem of absence; the role played by imagination and memory in making that which is absent present; and, finally, imagination's and memory's *a priori* reliance on sensory perception. Orthodox defenders of images justify the use of physical images in part on the grounds that they act as a stabilizer for the sense of sight, and so also for the imaginative and memory practices at the heart of late-medieval piety.¹⁵ As Shannon Gayk has

¹⁴ *Repressor*, p. 269.

¹⁵ See Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350-1500* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), e.g. p. 158.

described, Pecock similarly advocates images as props for vision and visual images drawn in the imagination.¹⁶ Pecock's engagement with Aristotelian friendship, however, with its emphasis on presence and proximity, also facilitates his advocacy of the value of the physical image's appeal to the sense of touch. If a reader accepts his reasoning as to why an image enables a man to love Christ in His absence, Pecock says in concluding his defence of image use, then he or she also has 'sufficient ground forto excuse fro blame' those who 'touche with her hondis the feet and othere parties and the clothis of ymagis, and wolen thanne aftir sette to her visage and to her i3en and to her mouthis her tho hondis'.¹⁷ The utility of the image – and specifically the three-dimensional image, with 'parties' and 'clothis' – is not therefore just in the visual image it affords to the sense of sight, but also in the tangible experience it mediates to the sense of touch: the same logic that allows a Christian to use an image as a proxy to see Christ in His absence, allows that he or she use it likewise to touch Him. Pecock's intervention in the controversy over images thus moves beyond the traditional terms of the written word versus the visual image, or of images as *libri laicorum*, to the relationship of material images to mental ones, and thereby out to a broader consideration of the structures of human cognition and sensation.¹⁸ By thinking about the problem of images through the figure of the friend, Pecock makes a powerful claim: in substituting for that which is absent, the image mimetically offers presence in ways that structures an ethics central to *caritas*, not just of vision, but also of touch.

Pecock's *Repressor*

¹⁶ Shannon Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 167. Cf. the discussion of Thomas Hoccleve, Chapter 2.

¹⁷ *Repressor*, p. 270.

¹⁸ See Chapter 5 in *Image, Text, and Religious Reform*, e.g. p. 156 on Pecock's contribution to the debate on the relationship of the visual image to the written word, and on images as books for the illiterate.

The *Repressor* targets a group of the laity that have fallen into error; more specifically, ‘tho erring persoones of the lay peple whiche ben clepid Lollardes’.¹⁹ Following the general proofs of Part 1, Parts 2 through 5 of the *Repressor* offer the ‘special maner’ of proofs with which Pecock defends the eleven ‘gouernauncis of the clergie’ attacked by Lollards.²⁰ The first of these governances, ‘hauyng and vsing of ymagis’, pertains to a more general use of images in Christian practice; the second, concerning pilgrimages ‘to dyuerse bodies and bonys of Seintis’ and ‘to ymagis of Crist crucified and of Marie and of othere Seintis’, attends to pilgrimage and the more specific role of images and relics as the object of pilgrimage.²¹ For Lollards, Christians who venerate ‘dead’ images run the risk of falling into idolatry, as well as of erring in belief. While some Lollards allow the use of a ‘pore crucifix’ (as did John Wyclif) on the grounds that Christ took bodily form, images of the Trinity are instead held to lead to misunderstandings of the nature of God.²² Another source of anxiety was the imputation of miraculous powers to images themselves. From a Lollard perspective, the proclivity displayed by some for touching images is evidence of both belief in their inherent power (which might be conveyed through touch) and of idolatry. One early fifteenth-century Lollard text thus registers unease at the spectacle of Christians clinging to images, caressing and kissing them, as if they were really those they represent: some ‘lewid folc...cleuen sadly strokande and kyssand þese olde stones and stokkis, laying down hore grete

¹⁹ *Repressor*, pp. 127-8. On the *Repressor*’s imagined audience, see further, Campbell, *Call to Read*, p. 28; and Bose, ‘Religious Dissent’, p. 41. ‘Lollardy’, of course, represents a more diverse (and sometimes conflicting) set of beliefs and practices than the use of a single term for heterodoxy in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries suggests.

²⁰ *Repressor*, p. 4. The eleven are: image use, pilgrimages, church ownership of property, the hierarchy of priests, the authority of the pope, ‘dyuersite and nouelte’ in strictness and forms of religious rule, prayer to saints, the cost of furnishing church interiors, practices concerning signs and sacraments, oath-swearing and the use of the death sentence. See further on Lollard and orthodox beliefs, Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts, Volume I: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); and for Lollardy in Pecock’s works in particular, see Kantik Ghosh, ‘Bishop Reginald Pecock and the Idea of “Lollardy”’, *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. Helen Barr (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 251-65.

²¹ *Repressor*, pp. 136; 175.

²² Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 136-41 (for Wyclif’s views, see, e.g. p. 138).

offryngis...as 3if þei weren Crist and oure Lauedy and Ion Baptist and Thomas of Caunterbery and siche oþer'.²³ Such tactile habits not only misdirect affection, but also time, money and materials – away from God and from charitable giving to the poor, who are living images of Christ, to the clergy and the church.²⁴ In broad terms, the defence Pecock makes in the *Repressor* to these and other Lollard conclusions about images is a conventional one: Scripture, reason and moral law (the threefold authority Pecock tests each governance against) do not forbid, but rather approve, that images be used – not, as Lollards fear, as objects of worship – but as 'rememoratiþf or mynding signes'.²⁵ Having established the lawfulness of image use for the purpose of recollection and remembrance, Pecock then proceeds to detail fifteen Lollard objections to these two governances, before refuting each objection in turn. That his arguments about the lawfulness of image use culminate in a powerful defence of those who caress and kiss images registers not only the strength of Lollard objection to touching images, but also the under-recognised importance of touch to medieval understandings of memory, cognition and love.

Three particular Lollard objections (13-15) form a unit that Pecock notes need special attention in refuting: by praying to, bowing to or kissing a cross, a person takes the cross to be a god.²⁶ While these actions may be performed by a Christian in private devotion, they are all variously mandated in liturgy: one prays to the cross, for example, when the hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt* ('the banners of the king advance') is sung in the Passion week; one bows to a cross in the Palm Sunday procession; and one kisses a cross (as the culmination of creeping to it) on Good Friday. Pecock is thus concerned to 'assoile' (resolve or refute) these objections because

²³ British Library MS Additional 24202, ff. 26-8v, edited in Anne Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 87.

²⁴ See further, Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform*, chapter 1, for a nuanced discussion of the spectrum of Lollard beliefs about images. See also Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, e.g. p. 27.

²⁵ See e.g. *Repressor*, pp. 136-7.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 207. Objection thirteen is detailed at pp. 199-202; fourteen at pp. 202-7; and fifteen at pp. 207-8.

some ‘wijters’ (blamers or critics, i.e. Lollards), are ‘out of eese [disturbed]’ when they must participate in these communal performances.²⁷ To explain the way in which prayer to a cross does not automatically make a god of it, Pecock makes recourse to ‘colouris of rethorik’: Scripture uses (as everyday speech does) figurative language, such as the synecdoche and the metonym, which shows how we can address the cross but in fact be directing our petition or worship to Christ.²⁸ To answer ‘the xiiij^e. and xv^e. argumentis to gidere vndir oon’ – that is, the charges that bowing to and kissing an image makes a god of it – Pecock first sets out three rules. It is here, perhaps unexpectedly, though entirely in line with the logic of the requirements of *caritas*, that the paradigm of friendship surfaces.

The first of these rules is that:

a man schal haue more feruentli hise affeccious and loues anentis his loued freend,
whanne and whilis thilk freend is at sumwhile present personali with him and bisidis him,
than he schal haue, if the freend be absent alwey and not personali present.²⁹

The axiom on which Pecock’s argument rests predicates the affection necessary for friendship on presence: a man loves his beloved friend more ‘feruentli’ when the friend is ‘present personali [i.e. bodily]’, ‘besidis him’, than he does if the friend is ‘absent alwey’. The second supposition is that: if a man’s friend is absent then in order to ‘encrese his gode affeccious’ towards the friend, the next best thing to bodily presence is imagining him to be present: ‘so it is, that thilk present

²⁷ Ibid, p. 207.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 255-67. On Pecock’s detailed arguments on rhetoric see further Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform*, e.g. pp. 175-80.

²⁹ *Repressor*, p. 267. A number of scholars have discussed this passage. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, offers a summary of Pecock’s claims, pp. 185-86, helpfully noting, n.175, that here Pecock expounds ‘the devotional values of imagining, inner visualising...which lay behind the theory and practice of medieval religious art’. W. R. Jones, ‘Lollards and Images: The Defense of Religious Art in Later Medieval England’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34.1 (1973), 27-50, notes Pecock’s use of the trope of the absent friend, but does not elaborate upon it (p. 41, n. 73). See also Alastair Minnis, ‘Affection and Imagination in “The Cloud of Unknowing” and Hilton’s “Scale of Perfection”’, *Traditio* 39 (1983), 323-366 (p. 362).

beyng of the freend, grettist aftir his bodili visible presence, is his presence in ymaginacioun'.³⁰

The third supposition is that:

It is esier forto ymagyne a thing absent to be present in an other thing lijk therto, than withoute eny other thing lijk therto. Forwhi euery thing lijk to an other thing bringith into ymaginacioun and into mynde better and lister and esier the thing to him lijk, than the thing to him lasse lijk or vnlijk.³¹

A physical image aids the difficult process of making present something that is absent in the imagination; the more like this image is to the thing it signifies, the easier and more precise is this imaginative work. The first and second of these rules thus posit the paradigm of friendship as central to Pecock's defence of performative, liturgical practices involving images; the second and third of these rules situate that defence further in imaginative and sensory theory. Yet these rules, at first, might seem a misdirection: they do not directly address the Lollard objections (to bowing to or kissing an image) that they are employed to answer. What the paradigm of friendship crucially provides, however, is the evidence, first, that bodily presence, perceptible to the senses, is the condition for generating love (as the second supposition clarifies: 'If the freend were bodili visibili present, thilk presence were best forto gendre the seid affeccioun');³² further, that the imagination serves as a virtual space for approximating presence, which, in turn, arouses love; and, finally, that imaginative practices, supported by sense perception of an image, do not generate love for the image but for the person of whom the image is a likeness. This paradigm thus further puts centre stage in the discussion of image use what is also at the heart of the commandment of *caritas* – love – but it does so in a way that makes it inextricable from the logic implicit in the notion of presence.

³⁰ *Repressor*, p 268.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 268.

Pecock's thinking here is thoroughly Thomist. In the *Summa*, Thomas writes that: love 'derives its species from its object, but its intensity from the lover...when the question is one of intensity, we must look to the man who loves. By this test a man loves those closest to him'.³³ Species (from the Greek denoting 'what a thing looks like') are, as Robert Pasnau explains, 'likenesses of the things they represent'. There are three kinds of species: in the air (*species in medio*); in the sense organs (*sensible species*); and in the intellect (*intelligible species*).³⁴ Species are thus generated by the object but received in the perceiver in the act of perception. Just as a person is able to see a stone due to the presence of 'the species of the stone in his eye', so a person is able to love another through perceiving and cognizing their species.³⁵ It is this, as Thomas goes on to explain, that effects a kind of mutual indwelling or union of the lover and the beloved ('Cognitively, the person loved, Y, is said to dwell in the lover, X, in the sense that he is consistently present in X's thoughts').³⁶ Love, then, cannot arise without presence and perception, but its intensity derives instead from the person who loves (just as clear vision of a stone depends, not on the stone's species, but in 'the eye's visual power'). This, then, accounts for the importance of proximity in the determining the strength of love felt for another. In the *Repressor*, Pecock takes this Thomist logic further: the nearer one is to the friend the more love is aroused; the closest one can be to another is to be touching.

Engaged as the *Repressor* is with the precise terms of Lollard arguments, the kinds of images Pecock requires his reader to view through the lens of friendship are, of course, predominantly (though not exclusively) three-dimensional ones. As Margaret Aston notes:

³³ *Summa theologiae*, 2a2æ.26, 7 (Gilby, XXXIV, 138-9).

³⁴ Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 13. Pp. 11-17 provides an excellent introduction to cognition and the role of species in Thomist thought.

³⁵ The useful comparison with Aquinas's explanation of how species operate in sight (1a.89, 6) is noted by the translator (Gilby, XXXIV, 138).

³⁶ *Summa theologiae*, 1a2æ.28, 2 (Gilby, XIX, 92-3).

The imagery seen as proscribed by the law was primarily three dimensional: the works of carvers in wood and stone...Lollards were certainly critical of the work of contemporary painters, but in directing the main burden of their criticism at image-*worship* they had in mind sculpture – “the craft of graving” – more than painting.³⁷

While this concern partly stems from Old Testament prohibitions concerning graven images, it also lies in the three-dimensional image’s different claim to realness in comparison with a flat, two-dimensional one.³⁸ If for Lollards this sculptural quality, in approximating greater lifelikeness, might lead the viewer down the dangerous path of crediting the image with liveliness, for Pecock (though he acknowledges that images may indeed at times miraculously seem alive) an image’s lifelikeness works less to animate the image than the imagination by providing tools for sensory perception.³⁹ Such sculptural images, niched in the fabric of churches and used in liturgical performances, offer visible presence to the sense of sight, but they also can be reached out to and touched. The paradigm established by these three rules thus has staggering implications for Pecock’s theory of images: not merely ‘rememoratijf or mynding signes’, images are mediators of the perception of presence at the heart of friendship; and just as the desire to be in the presence of a friend is completed in an embrace or a kiss, so too is the imaginative work of making an absent friend present completed in touching an image. In revising the function of

³⁷ Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 146.

³⁸ The prohibition against graven images is given, for example, in the second commandment of the Decalogue recorded in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. On Lollard objections to images, see further Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), p. 2. On the medieval association of three-dimensional images with ‘reality’, see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 41.

³⁹ The miraculous animation and agency of some images is touched on by Pecock; see *Repressor*, pp. 153-4; 157. For thinking around vivacity or aliveness and images, see further Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), e.g. pp. 26-7; and ‘The Vivacity of Images: St Katherine, Knighton’s Lollards, and the Breaking of Idols’, *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image*, ed. Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 131-50. On the links between sculpture and imagination, see further Camille, *Gothic Idol*, p. 45, where he recounts Hugh of St Victor’s discussion of sculpture compared with painting in the *Didascalion*.

images thus, Pecock simultaneously exposes the problem of absence, which images are used to counteract, to be all about *caritas*.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

The Middle Ages inherits several classical theories of friendship – principally via Cicero's *De amicitia* and Aristotle's *Ethica Nicomachea* – and develops, in part under the influence of Augustine, Christian ideas of spiritual friendship (as in the writings of Aelred of Rievaulx and Bernard of Clairvaux) as well as of friendship with God (as in the work of Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquinas).⁴⁰ It seems, however, that it is Aristotle's theory of friendship, with its emphasis on presence and proximity, that motivates Pecock's recourse to the figure of the absent friend in his defence of image use in the *Repressor*.⁴¹ The *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated into Latin by Robert Grosseteste around 1240, details Aristotle's philosophy of friendship in Books VIII and IX.⁴² While Pecock does not explicitly cite Aristotle in his discussion of the figure of the absent friend, his familiarity with the *Ethics* is evidenced by his citation of both Grosseteste's translation of the *Ethics* and Thomas Aquinas's commentary on it elsewhere in the *Repressor*.⁴³

⁴⁰ James McEvoy, 'Ultimate Goods: Happiness, Friendship, and Bliss', *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 254-75, outlines friendship in Augustine. For Aelred of Rievaulx, see Lefler, *Theologizing Friendship*; and for Bernard of Clairvaux, see Shawn Madison Krahmer, 'The Friend as "Second Self" and the Theme of Substitution in the Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 31.1 (1996), 21-33. On the influence of Aristotelian friendship on Grosseteste's theology of salvation, see James McEvoy, 'Robert Grosseteste on the Cross and Redemptive Love', *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 66.2 (1999), 289-315 (e.g. 297-8).

⁴¹ Cicero's model of friendship does not, as Aristotle's does, require personal acquaintance. See Julian Haseldine, 'Understanding the Language of *amicitia*: The Friendship Circle of Peter of Celle (c.1115-1183)', *Journal of Medieval History* 20 (1994), 237-60 (240).

⁴² Grosseteste also writes a commentary on the *Ethics*. See James McEvoy, 'Grosseteste's Reflections on Aristotelian Friendship: A "New" Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.8-14', *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives on His Thought and Scholarship*, ed. James McEvoy (Brepols: Turnhout, 1994), pp. 149-68.

⁴³ On the influence of Aristotle on Pecock's works, see further V. H. H. Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock: A Study in Ecclesiastical History and Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945), pp. 84-7. Hitchcock, ed., *Folwer*, notes some 'points of likeness' between Pecock and Aristotle in her commentary, and gives Jessie Flemming's assessment of the closer relationship of Pecock to Thomas Aquinas than to Aristotle, p. 230.

And, as already noted, Aristotelian friendship finds profound expression in the thinking of Thomas, who is an important authority for Pecock.⁴⁴ While the *Ethics* has little to say on the subject of images, it provides particularly powerful avenues for thinking about the binaries of presence and absence in terms of the interplay of sensory perception and affection.

Aristotle establishes that friendship is not only ‘necessary’ (‘without friends no one would choose to live’) but also ‘noble’.⁴⁵ While the paradigm of friendship structures relationships from the domestic (parent-child; man-wife) to the political (ruler-subject; nation-nation), perfect friendship is that between equals. Aristotle defines perfect friendship as: ‘the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves.’⁴⁶ The conditions for perfect friendship are therefore grounded in virtue, equality and likeness – the friend is ‘another self’ – as well as in reciprocity of feeling and mutual well-wishing, to the extent that one friend is prepared to sacrifice himself for the other (‘the good man...does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them’).⁴⁷ For such a friendship between equals to arise, however, both time and familiarity are required: ‘one must...acquire some experience of the other person and become familiar with him, and that is very hard.’⁴⁸ Thus perfect friends, in Aristotle’s estimation, live together; such proximity is what makes love for the friend possible. We might thus summarise the central tenets of Aristotelian friendship, as the late fifteenth-century *Catholicon Anglicum* does Middle English ‘Frende’, in four Latin glosses: ‘amicus [loved one], necessarius, proximus [nearest, next], alter ego’.⁴⁹ Most significant for Pecock’s thinking about images is that the ‘amicus’ must be ‘proximus’.

⁴⁴ See n.12 above.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* (*Nicomachean Ethics*), trans. W. D. Ross, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 1058-9, 1155a.1.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 1061, 1156b.3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 1087, 11169a.8.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 1064, 1158a.6.

⁴⁹ *Catholicon Anglicum: An English-Latin Wordbook*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage and H. B. Wheatley, EETS 75 (1881; reprint 1987), p. 142.

As Aristotle makes clear, proximity and presence themselves, of course, are all to do with sensory perception. Embedded in the *Ethics*' discussion of friendship is, accordingly, another of perception, where Aristotle is at pains to posit not just perception but the *recognition* of perception ('he who sees perceives that he sees, and he who hears, that he hears', etc.) as lying at the core of self-consciousness and ultimately of happiness: a man 'needs, therefore, to be conscious of the existence of his friend...and this will be realized in their living together'.⁵⁰ The perception of the presence of the friend is thus necessary, not only in order for friendly feelings to arise but also for those feelings to be sustained:

Those who live together delight in each other and confer benefits on each other, but those who are asleep or locally separated are not performing, but are disposed to perform, the activities of friendship; distance does not break off the friendship absolutely, but only the activity of it. But if the absence is lasting, it seems actually to make men forget their friendship; hence the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'.⁵¹

Somewhat problematically for the medieval reception of the *Ethics*, however, the human possibility that friendship might survive (temporary) absence or distance is not one Aristotle affords to God, nor does he allow perfect friendship to exist between God and man on the grounds of inequality:

Much can be taken away and friendship remain, but when one party is removed to a great distance, as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases.⁵²

As Jacques Derrida observes on this passage in *The Politics of Friendship*:

Presence or proximity [proximité] are the condition of friendship, whose energy [énergie] is lost in absence or in remoteness. Men are called 'good' or 'virtuous' from the vantage

⁵⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 1090, 1170a.9. On medieval reception of Aristotle's ideas about happiness and their dependency on sensory perception, see Jessica Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Love after Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 135-49.

⁵¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 1063, 1157b.5.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 1066, 1159a.7.

point of aptitude, possibility, *habitus* (kath'énin) or in act (kat'énérgeian). It is the same for friendship: friends who sleep or live in separate places are not friends in act (ouk énergoúsi). *The energy of friendship draws its force from presence or from proximity*. If absence and remoteness do not destroy friendship, they attenuate or exhaust it, they enervate it.⁵³

Derrida's reading of the *Ethics* usefully articulates the condition of presence for the 'energy' – activity, but also force or potency – constitutive of Aristotelian friendship. If friendship is generated and nurtured through living together and through sensory perception, how can man (in the here and now) be friends with God? While medieval thinking asserts instead that friendship with God is necessary and possible, Aristotelian friendship, in making proximity or presence the condition of friendship, poses the question of how love for God is to be maintained and acted out at a distance and in His absence.⁵⁴ Christ's incarnation is key to medieval answers to this problem, but so too, as the *Repressor* demonstrates, are images.

Images and absence

While Aristotelian qualities of perfect friendship – the friend is 'another self', prepared to sacrifice his life for his friends – might be particularly suggestive for analogy with Christ, as they are elsewhere in scholastic and vernacular theology, Thomas Aquinas's theology of friendship, as Nathan Lefler summarises, is 'transcendent': that is, it is more interested in friendship with God 'in his essence' than with the person of Christ.⁵⁵ It is Aristotle's condition of equality for friendship in the *Ethics*, however, that motivates, in Lefler's words, Thomas's 'brief, lapidary

⁵³ Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997), p. 222.

⁵⁴ See further, Caroline White, 'Friendship in Absence—Some Patristic Views', *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), pp. 68-88, for Patristic engagement with the idea of absence.

⁵⁵ *Theologizing Friendship*, pp. 117-20. For example, Robert Grosseteste takes up the notion of the friend as the 'alter ipse' (the other self) in developing his theology of salvation. John Lydgate's poem, 'A Freond at Neode', shows Christ's death for mankind provides the superlative example of friendship; and the fifteenth-century *Mirour of Mans Saluacioun* describes Christ's loss of blood in the Crucifixion itself as a 'friendly' act.

formulation of the theology of friendship in brazenly Christological terms'.⁵⁶ In Book IV, chapter 54 of the *Summa contra gentiles*, Thomas posits that friendship between man and God in his essence is made possible through Christ's Incarnation:

since friendship consists in a certain equality, things greatly unequal seem unable to be coupled in friendship. Therefore, to get greater familiarity in friendship between man and God it was helpful for man that God become man, since even by nature man is man's friend; and so in this way, 'while we know God visibly, we may [through Him] be borne to love of things invisible'.⁵⁷

Incarnation, then, effects a kind of equality, a 'familiarity', between God and man necessary in Aristotelian terms for perfect friendship. Inextricably in Thomas's thinking here, however, the equality effected by the Incarnation also entails presence – not only bringing God down to earth, but making Him perceptible to human, bodily senses: knowledge of God in His visible, human form leads us to love of God in His essence. While Thomas is thinking about the Incarnation and not about images at this point in the *Summa contra gentiles*, it is precisely this catenation that grounds the orthodox claim, commonly made in the medieval period, that making images of God is lawful: the same move in which Incarnation makes friendship between God and man possible also makes God visible and representable.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Theologizing Friendship*, p. 119.

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, gen. ed. Joseph Kenny, O.P. (New York: Hanover House, 1955-7), Book IV 'Salvation', trans. Charles O'Neil. See Marko Fuchs, 'Philia and Caritas: Some Aspects of Aquinas's Reception of Aristotle's Theory of Friendship', *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 203-19.

⁵⁸ Influentially elaborating a connection made by earlier writers, John of Damascus cites the Incarnation as authorising the making and use of images in his eighth-century defence of icons, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1980), e.g. pp. 23-6. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century discussions of images commonly continue to cite this argument: on its longer history, see further, Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 115-23; and Stanbury, *The Visual Object*, e.g. p. 21, specifically for English examples in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

According to orthodox defences of images, then, Christ's Incarnation authorises bodily representations of the divine. But if the Incarnation is fundamentally about making God present and perceptible to man, because of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension the fullness of this presence is deferred until a future moment: Christ is, for the time being, bodily absent.⁵⁹ Thus one function of images, as Roger Dymmok suggests in his Latin, anti-Lollard treatise *Liber contra errores et hereses lollardorum* (c.1396), is to offer a material remnant of, or a substitute for, bodily presence:

when a man has loved something fervently, he desires its presence; and therefore, since we rightly owe the saints of God to be worshipped and venerated by means of the honours that are due to them, because we cannot have the persons themselves present, we are advised at least to come near to their relics and images in order to worship them.⁶⁰

Images and relics, in the form of body parts or objects that have been touched by or worn on the body, offer material points of connection with an absent God and absent saints, love for whom manifests itself as a desire for presence, for nearness to them. At heart, then, image-making addresses the human need for something of the divine to be made available to the senses. As David Freedberg remarks, the aim of '[medieval meditative] forms that depend on real images for the production of mental ones' is precisely 'to grasp that which is absent'.⁶¹ What Dymmok imagines as presence, however – being near to a material relic or image – though not without active potential (as a locus for worship, but also for healing, for spiritual transformation, etc.), is a far cry from that defined by Aristotle and implied by Pecock, as the energy of living together.

⁵⁹ On Christ's 'imminent disappearance', see Amy Knight Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (New York: Zone, 2012).

⁶⁰ Rogeri Dymmok, *Liber Contra Errores et Hereses Lollardorum*, ed. H. S. Cronin (London: Published for the Wyclif Society by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1922), 193: 'cum homo aliquid feruenter amauerit, eius presenciam desiderat; et ideo, cum sanctis Dei merito affici debeamus et eos debitis honoribus uenerari, quia personas ipsas in presenti habere non possumus, saltem ad eorum reliquias uel ymagines adorandus accedere monemur' (Modern English translation my own).

⁶¹ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 161.

As the *Repressor* demonstrates, it is the mnemonic function of images that becomes key for enabling a different kind of presence – one that is an active, lived out performance.

Since, as Aristotle suggests, long absence might not only enervate love but lead to forgetting, images are also justified to remind Christians of those they ought to love and serve – in other words, as goads to the activity of remembrance. In his fifth principal conclusion on image use in Part 2 of the *Repressor*, Pecock thus points out that, in ordaining the Sacrament of the Altar in which bread and wine are made flesh and blood, Christ Himself instituted Christian use of signs and symbols for precisely the purpose of remembrance: ‘Crist ordeyned in the newe lawe visible sacramentis to be take and vsid as seable rememoratiyf signes of Crist, and of his passioun and deeth, and of his holi lijf’.⁶² Since Christ ordained the use of ‘seable’ signs in the form of bread and wine, Pecock concludes, then images that are likenesses of Him must also be permissible. The grounds for this claim lie in medieval sign theory.⁶³ If it is lawful and expedient to use a sign that is not like the thing it signifies, it must also be to use one that is like, or more like, that which it signifies:

Forwhi the likenes of a signe to his significat, (that is to seie, to the thing signified bi him,) wole helpe the signe forto signifie and forto make remembraunce the bettir upon the thing signified; but so it is, that ymagis graued, coruun, or 3ut ben more lijk to Crist and to his passioun, than ben the sacramentis whiche Crist ordeyned.⁶⁴

⁶² *Repressor*, p. 163.

⁶³ St Augustine influentially lays out the thinking that forms the foundation of medieval sign theory, for example, in *De doctrina Christiana*. For the development of sign theory in the high medieval period, and especially its implication with questions of absence and presence, see Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, ‘Medieval Identity, A Sign, A Concept’, *American Historical Review* 105.5 (2000), 1489-1533; for the later medieval period, see further Arthur Ross, *Medieval Sign Theory and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

⁶⁴ *Repressor*, p. 163. Cf. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1958): ‘It is true that everyone seeks a certain verisimilitude in making signs so that these signs, in so far as is possible, may resemble the things that they signify...Where pictures of statues are concerned, or other similar imitative works...no one errs when he sees the likeness, so that he recognizes what things are represented’, p. 61. On the role of likeness, see further Heather Madar, ‘Iconography of Sign: A Semiotic Reading of the Arma

Images of Christ that are graven, carven or cast ('ymagis graued, coruun, or 3ut'), Pecock somewhat audaciously claims, are therefore more efficacious signs of Him than the sacraments, their particular present-making power notwithstanding. Here, Pecock seeds the principle of likeness that he returns to in his claim that an 'ymage of Crist crucified' can best mediate friendship with an absent Christ: likeness helps the sign signify and better enables remembrance. This principle is so crucial because of how human memory operates.

Medieval memory work, as Mary Carruthers' demonstrates, is not a neutral, merely intellectual process of recollection, but a fully embodied, affective one that is all about 'making present'.⁶⁵ Staged in the imagination and reliant on prior sensory perception, it is this imaginative making present that enables the virtual performance of friendship with God that must, in Pecock's thinking, accord with a Christian's external actions. Pecock's broadly Aristotelian understanding of the nexus of sense perception, imagination and memory is central to his image theory and, in fact, is foundational to his whole literary project. The *Donet*, the *Folewer* and the *Reule*, for example, each predicate vernacular instruction in theology on a prior knowledge of what man is and on an understanding of the interrelation of body and soul. Pecock thus sets out at the start of each of these works the operation of the five outer wits (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) and their cerebral processing by the five inner wits (common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation and memory).⁶⁶ The *Donet* explains that the office of the senses is 'forto knowe bodili þingis in her presence, and whilis þei ben in kynde'; the inward wits, instead, work to know such things when they are absent.⁶⁷ As Pecock's multiple accounts all reiterate, the imagination plays a key role in the cognitive capacity to make something that is absent to the

Christi', *ReVisioning: Critical Methods of Seeing Christianity in the History of Art*, ed. James Romaine and Linda Stratford (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), pp. 115-31 (e.g. pp. 124-5).

⁶⁵ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), see, e.g. p. 275. Carruthers notes the derivation of the Latin verb *representare* from *praesens*, meaning 'presence in time'.

⁶⁶ See, for example, *Donet*, pp. 8-11; *Folewer*, pp. 20-30; and *Reule*, p. 37, etc.

⁶⁷ *Donet*, p. 9.

senses present in the mind, and further, in Pecock's account, in storing (along with memory) 'alle þe same now seid knowyngis wip her fundamentis [foundations, bases], whiche ben called "similitudis", "liknessis", or "ymagis" of þingis, *þat þei falle not soon aweie*'.⁶⁸

Precisely what these 'similitudis', 'liknessis' or 'ymagis' are is made clearer in the *Folewer*, which builds on the foundation of sensory knowledge given in the *Donet* by detailing more fully the optical theory of intromission.⁶⁹ This theory is an extension of medieval thinking around the notion of species, at the heart (as we have seen) of Thomist understandings of cognition. The 'likeness' (also referred to in optical theory as 'species') of an object is impressed into the eyeball, from whence the 'spiritis' – a bodily spirit that performs the offices of soul – carries it into the sinews (or nerves): the eye thus 'seeþ and knowiþ þe þing whos liknesse is so receyuyd into þe i3e'.⁷⁰ That likeness is then conveyed further 'bi office of spiritis' into the forehead, where it is impressed first lightly in the common wit and then more deeply in the imagination, by which likeness the inner wits 'knowe þe same þing' as the eye perceived. The way in which a likeness of an object sensed is brought into the body by means of *spiritis* and impressed in the imagination supports the logic of Pecock's claim that the more like an image is to the thing it signifies the easier it is to do cognitive work with it; it also discloses a material aspect to imaginative 'making present'. Likenesses – whether first brought into the mind through the eye or through any other organ of sense – are called up from the store in memory to stock the images required in the process of imagining.⁷¹ Doing this without the aid of any physical image is hard work, as Pecock

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 10, my emphasis.

⁶⁹ See Mishtooni Bose, 'Vernacular Philosophy and the Making of Orthodoxy in the Fifteenth Century', *New Medieval Literatures* 7 (2005), 73-99, for Pecock's knowledge of optical theory, 88-93. David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision From Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), offers a detailed history of medieval optical theory and the theory of intromission, in particular. Chapter 7 details its place, not only in science and philosophy, but also in theology.

⁷⁰ *Folewer*, p. 39. See Michael Camille, 'Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing', *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 197-223, on the intromission model of vision, the importance of the principle of likeness and the role of the 'species' in bridging 'the physical gap between the object and the sense organ' (p. 208).

⁷¹ Cf. *Folewer*, pp. 39-40 on the operation of the other senses in comparison with sight.

points out in the *Repressor*. If a man seeks to recall what he has heard preached or read in church previously, for example,

it schal be to him miche gretter labour for to laboure so in his brayn bi taking mynde and for to withinneforth calle into mynde without si3t of the i3e withouteforth vpon ymagis what he bifore knewe and thou3te vpon, than it schulde be to him if he biholde bi i3e si3t upon ymagis or other peinting according to his labour. And a3enward, bi biholding upon ymagis or upon such peinting his witt schal be dressid and lad forthe euener and more stabili and with myche lasse peyne and labour, than forto wrastle withinneforth in his owne ymaginaciouns withoute leding withouteforth had bi biholding upon ymagis.⁷²

The cerebral struggle involved in calling into mind ‘withinneforth’, without an external image ‘withouteforth’ looked upon by the eye, is amply reflected in Pecock’s convoluted syntax. But the essential point is a simple one: images, especially those that are like that which they signify, make the devotional work of memory easier and less painful, but also less error-prone – a man’s wit shall be ‘dressid [guided, directed] and lad forthe euener and more stabili’ – by making present to the sense of sight an image upon which inner sight can found its images in the imagination.

What motivates Pecock’s thinking here, and throughout his discussion of the senses, imagination and memory, is a recognition of man’s natural frailty. It is because ‘mankinde in this lijf is so freel’ that ‘seable’ signs are needed in addition to ‘heareable’ ones: man’s ability to recall and remember rightly is affected by labour, study, old age and sickness (when ‘his heed is feeble for labour or studie bifore had or for sikeness or for age’); and humans are prone to forgetfulness.⁷³ The sixth opening conclusion on pilgrimages offered by Pecock in Part 2 of the *Repressor* makes clear just what is at stake in man’s tendency to forget: if Christ’s life and Passion are not remembered, ‘thei schulen not be reckid [regarded]’, and ‘sithen al thing which is not had in mynde of a man is, as toward eny thing which he schulde do ther with or ther bi, deed or lost

⁷² *Repressor*, p. 214.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 209; p. 213; e.g. p. 165.

or not being'.⁷⁴ Not remembering Christ might mean it is as if He is dead, lost or even as not having existed at all.

The parallel sixth conclusion on images identifies this problem of forgetfulness more specifically as the central issue for *caritas*. Here Pecock reminds the reader of what he has set out in the *Repressor*'s opening: that each man (and woman) is commanded to 'loue God and drede God, that he mai therbi be hertid and strengthid in wil forto serue God'; he therefore needs to 'ofte thinke vpon tho thingis and meenis, whiche schulden stire him forto loue God and drede God'. And yet: 'forto so ofte remembre we ben ful freel and for3eteful'.⁷⁵ The memory work central to obeying the biblical commandment to love God, neighbour and self is potentially compromised by man's natural frailty. As Thomas acknowledges in his discussion of charity in the *Summa*, although God is of Himself 'supremely knowable, ...on account of the feebleness of our knowledge, which has to depend on things of sense, we do not find him so'.⁷⁶ For Pecock, as we have seen, images are part of the solution to man's dependency on sense perception.

Significantly, then, it is in the context of this reminder of the command to 'loue and drede God', that Pecock first invokes the figure of the absent friend (though he does not use the term 'friend', the analogy is implicitly one of friendship). Referring to the authority of reason ('doom of resoun allowith'), Pecock argues it is permissible:

forto make and haue for us silf and for othere men ymagis of men and wommen, that tho men and wommen be therbi the oftir thou3t upon, and therefore be therbi the more loued and the better serued, and that the more be doon and suffrid of us and of othere biholders, for as miche as we bithenken tho persoones or the ensaumpling of the persoones so representid bi the ymagis, and that the more be doon and suffrid for her sake of us silf and of othere men seing the same ymagis with vs.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 182.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 165.

⁷⁶ *Summa theologiae*, 2a2æ.24, 2 (Gilby, xxxiv, 38-9).

⁷⁷ *Repressor*, pp. 164-5.

Just as an image of an absent friend enables another to think about (or imagine) them often and thus better love and serve them, so too, Pecock claims, does an image of God or a saint. The Latin treatise (written between 1385 and 1395) known variously as *De tolerandis imaginibus* or *De adoracione Ymaginum*, attributed to Walter Hilton, similarly argues that images are permissible ‘because sometimes a friend, who absences himself from his friend, is in the habit of giving him an image as a memento, so that he can remember the absent friend by looking at the image’.⁷⁸ Pecock’s accumulative thinking around friendship and images in the *Repressor*, however, goes much further than does Hilton’s brief recourse to it in *De tolerandis imaginibus*.⁷⁹ In Pecock’s second, extended use of the figure of friendship fifteen chapters later, Christ becomes the absent friend we are recalling, friendship with whom is the central requirement of the greatest biblical commandment. And just as an image as a memento facilitates the imaginative making present of an absent friend necessary to perform and sustain the activity of friendship (love, service and even sacrifice), so too does an image of Christ enable the memory work central to meeting the demands of *caritas*.

Christ the absent friend

Like Thomas Aquinas’s, Pecock’s theology of friendship is concerned principally with friendship with God in his essence. The turn to Christ as friend in the *Repressor*, is (like Thomas’s in the *Summa contra gentiles*) exceptional and all the more compelling as a result. Pecock arrives at the

⁷⁸ Walter Hilton’s *Latin Writings*, ed. John P. H. Clark and Cheryl Taylor, 2 vols, Analecta Carutisana, 124 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), p. 199: ‘Quia interdum amicus se absentans ab amico, aliquod signum recordatiuum ad amicum suum transmitter solet, ut per intuitum signi recordetur absentis amici’. Modern English translation my own. For a detailed summary of this treatise, see J. P. H. Clark, ‘Walter Hilton in Defence of the Religious Life and of the Veneration of Images’, *The Downside Review* 103 (1985), 1-25. See further, Alastair Minnis, ‘Affection and Imagination in “The Cloud of Unknowing” and Hilton’s “Scale of Perfection”’, *Traditio* 39 (1983), 323-366 (361).

⁷⁹ See further Marks, *Image and Devotion*, for ways Pecock goes beyond other defences of the image, e.g. p. 18.

idea of Christ the friend, as I have sought to explicate in this essay, as the culmination of his thinking around *caritas* as friendship predicated on presence, and around the role of the imagination, memory and the senses in making present something that is absent. From this perspective, Pecock's thinking about images in terms of the presence necessary for friendship in the *Repressor* is entirely consonant with a broadly Aristotelian understanding of the role of the senses and imagination in making present what is absent. Having set out the paradigm for friendship in the form of three rules at the opening of chapter 20 of Part 2 of the *Repressor* Pecock proceeds thus (as already outlined above):

Ech man hath nede forto haue gode affeccious anentis Crist, as upon his best freend; and this freend zeueth not to us his presence visibili; wherfore it is profitable to ech man for to ymagine this freend be present to us bodili and in a maner visibili. And sithen herto serueth ful weel and ful myche the ymage of Crist crucified, whilis and if the biholder ymagineth Crist to be streist abrode bodili thoruz the bodi of the same ymage, heed to heed, hond to hond, breste to breste, foot to foot.⁸⁰

In our second look at this passage, we should first note the invocation of the commandment of *caritas* ('ech man hath nede forto haue gode affeccious anentis Crist'), its expression as friendship ('as upon his best freend') and the way it steers Pecock's argument: images are imbricated profoundly in fulfilling the fundamental requirements of Christian living. Christ the friend is not visibly present, and yet as the first rule has established and as Aristotle emphasises, presence is the condition for the arousal of love and its increase. This, as Thomas emphasises in his account of charity in the *Summa*, is rooted in 'dwelling together', which concept (as the translator notes) 'is given its full and active force...*Convivere, conversatio, communicatio, participatio* are key-words for association which is the basis of friendship'.⁸¹ The condition of cohabitation for friendship is likewise drawn out by Pecock in the proofs he gives of the first rule:

⁸⁰ *Repressor*, p. 269.

⁸¹ *Summa theologiae*, note to 2a2æ.23, 1 (Gilby, XXXIV, 5).

This reule is openli trewe bi experience. Forwhi, (not withstanding a man talke and speke of his freend at the mete table or in sum other place, and haue as good affeccioun as he can haue upon the same freend in such absence,) 3it if in the meene while the freend come into him personali and sitte doun with him, he schal haue miche gretter affeccioun vpon the seid freend than he hadde in the freendis absence.⁸²

The ‘mete [dinner] table’ becomes a kind of paradigmatic space for practising friendship: for sitting and talking together in person, or, in the friend’s absence, for sitting and talking *about* the friend. The problem is thus implicitly raised: how is Christ to be loved above all others, if those others are present and He is absent?⁸³ Imagining Christ to be ‘present to us bodili’ goes some way to countering this problem, not least since, as the second rule has established, making something present in the imagination, though inferior to bodily presence, is nonetheless a real form of presence with a material felt aspect that enables love. This imaginative memory work is aided best by using an image of Christ crucified, because, as established by the third rule, it bears a direct likeness with that which it represents.

It is this insistence on the importance of the sign’s likeness to what it signifies that leads Pecock to reject, earlier in the *Repressor*, the Lollard argument “‘that ech Cristen man is a perfiter and a fuller and a spedier [that is, ‘efficacious’, but also ‘exact’] ymage of Crist than is eny stok [piece of wood] or stoon graued”’.⁸⁴ In so doing, Pecock closes down the possibility (at the heart of Lollard arguments against images) that the energy required for friendship with Christ might derive from proximity to one’s neighbour. Listing three conditions required in order to be a perfect, full and efficacious image of Christ, Pecock reiterates firstly that the greater degree of

⁸² *Repressor*, p. 267.

⁸³ Thomas in the *Summa theologiae* asserts that since charity is caused by God it cannot, in this sense, cease or be diminished (see 2a2æ.24, 10.), but he acknowledges that man’s reliance on sense perception to know God creates a problem (see 2a2æ.27, 4).

⁸⁴ *Repressor*, p. 219. See further on man as a true image of God, Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, e.g. pp. 155-9.

likeness there is, the greater is the claim of one thing to be the perfect image of another.⁸⁵ The second condition is that the image must be ordained to signify something in particular. The third is that the image must signify singly (using a sign which signifies multiply will mean its likeness to Christ will suffer interference from its likeness to something else). Pecock therefore concludes:

no Cristen man now lyuyng hath these iij. condicions anentis the persoon of Crist in his manhode, as hath a stok or a stoon graued into the likenes of Crist hanging on a cros nakid and wounded...except whanne a quyk man is sett in a pley to be hangid nakid on a cros and to be in semyng woundid and scourgid. And this bifallith ful seelde and in fewe placis and cuntrees.⁸⁶

Notably, then, a living man acting out the part of Christ in the Crucifixion, as might be seen in a mystery play, trumps images. But since this, at least according to Pecock, happens seldom and in only a few places, three-dimensional images that *represent* Christ crucified are the next best thing.⁸⁷

The utility of an image's likeness is further extended in Pecock's detailing of the precise way in which a Christian should use the image in the imagination in relation to the physical image: an image is particularly efficacious in making present an absent Christ, 'whilis and if the biholder ymagineth Crist to be streist abrode bodili thoruz the bodi of the same ymage, heed to heed, hond to hond, breste to breste, foot to foot'. What, though, does Pecock mean by this? 'Streist abrode', suggests both the idea of extension (the *MED* s. v. 'strecchen', gives 'stretched

⁸⁵ *Repressor*, pp. 219-20.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁸⁷ The question of whether London had comparable biblical play cycles to, e.g., York or Coventry remains under discussion. There are records of a biblical drama performed at Clerkenwell (just outside of London) between 1384 and 1409. Anne Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), suggest this was a continuous, regular tradition of playing the biblical cycle. Lawrence M. Clopper, 'London and the Problem of the Clerkenwell Plays', *Comparative Drama*, 34.3 (2000), 291-303, believes instead that these were one-off performances. But in either case, the evidence disappears after 1409, so whether such plays were regularly being performed in London at the time Pecock is writing remains uncertain.

out' as one possibility for 'streist abrode (forth)'), as well as of straightness or directness. One way of understanding the imaginative process Pecock describes, then, is as follows: in looking at the image that gives physical sight the Christian needs also to see the real Christ stretched through or over this image in the imagination. That the past participle of the verb 'strecchen' (as the *MED* attests) might be rendered 'streist' implies precisely this kind of stretching (so 'streist abrode', in this reading, would mean 'stretched across'). In this sense, there is some overlap with the common use of Middle English 'strecchen' to refer to Christ's body on the cross, of which examples in medieval literature are plentiful, or with Christ's own act of stretching down from the cross to embrace the penitent sinner as His friend, as recounted in an exemplum drawn upon in Good Friday sermons.⁸⁸

Another complementary way of understanding what Pecock is describing, however, is according to the more specific terms of the operation of sensory perception. As an adjective (derived from the same verb 'strecchen'), 'streist' also means 'straight' or 'direct' and so recalls the vernacular vocabulary for describing the optical lines (conveying species) understood to stretch from an object to the eye in the theory of intromission (so, in this second reading, 'streist abrode' would mean something like 'straight through'). Underpinning the cognitive process that maps an image of Christ in the imagination to a physical image is thus a sensory one predicated (quite literally) on straight lines. The encyclopaedia *On the Properties of Things*, translated into Middle English by John Trevisa around 1398, thus records, following the authority of Aristotle, that sight is made 'by straite lynes vpon þe whiche þe liknes of þe þing þat is iseyne comeþ to þe

⁸⁸ On this motif, see Margaret Aston, 'Lollards and the Cross', *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 99-113, and Sara Lipton, 'The Sweet Lean of His Head': Writing about Looking at the Crucifix in the High Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 1172-1208. Cf. Lipton's discussion of Rupert Deutz (1179). Exemplum collections tell of how, on Good Friday, Christ leaned down from the cross to embrace a penitent sinner; see Gwenfair Walters Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England: Lay Spirituality and Sacred Glimpses of the Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 149 for examples.

sist'.⁸⁹ When a viewer sees an image of the crucified Christ, the lines conveying the image's likeness to sight connect Christ in the imagination with the physical image: head to head, hand to hand, breast to breast, foot to foot.

By describing, and so teaching, a form of imagining predicated on the operation of sight, in which a virtual image of Christ is 'streist abroad bodily thorow the body' of a physical image, Pecock is at pains to show the material connection between interior and exterior that orients how liturgical performances should be understood: external actions (such as processing with, praying and bowing to, or kissing images) should be contiguous with an imaginative process that aims to make Christ in some sense really present. Attentiveness to this contiguity between interior presence and external acts, achieved through this imaginative practice, is what staves off idolatry by properly directing worship and love to God. Such contiguity, not only of the external with the interior image, but also of external action with imagined action, in facilitating a kind of virtual living together, is thus key to performing the activity of friendship necessary to *caritas*. Indeed, as Pecock observes, such was the 'oolde practik of deuote Cristen men'. Thus, in Palm Sunday processions when the cross was bowed to, devout Christians 'helden hem self forto meete bodily and presentli with Crist' in the imagination. Likewise, in creeping to the Cross on Good Friday, 'aftir her ymaginacioun' they 'crepiden to the persoon of Crist, which bi her ymaginacioun was bodily streist forth with the body of the ymage'. And in kissing the feet of the image on the cross, they did so, 'not as that the feet of the ymage weren al that thei there kissiden, but that ther with thei kissiden the feet of Crist whom thei ymagineden to be there in bodily maner present'.⁹⁰ In these further iterations of, or steps in, imagining Christ to be 'bodily streist forth with the body of the ymage', the lines established between the imagined image and the physical one through vision are first paralleled by the physical extension of the viewer's body

⁸⁹ M. C. Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De Proprietatibus Rerum*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I, 109. Lines are understood to also be bent or refracted.

⁹⁰ *Repressor*, pp. 269-70.

towards the image in the act of bowing and then, finally, replaced with the body itself in the act of touching.

We might think that vision is unique in its reception of species cast out from an object, but, as Pecock notes, all the senses are understood to bring likenesses into the body in essentially similar ways. *On the Properties of Things* further suggests that all the inner senses, located in the brain, are connected to each of the sense organs, and so in some way to all objects of sense through lines: ‘hit is comyn and general to all þe vttir wittis þat fram þe innere wit, þat hatte *sensus communis* “þe comyn witte”, comeþ as it were lynes out of þe middle þerof to eueruche singular vttir wit and makeþ it parfite’.⁹¹ Thus, in the act of kissing the feet of an image of Christ while imagining kissing the feet of Christ, it is touch itself that establishes the material connection (the lines conveying species) between image and imagination, making them contiguous. The imagined and the actual are thus traversed through touch, creating presence and arousing love.

Touching images

Pecock asserts that the same imaginative and sensory processes at work in the ‘practik’ of Christians in the past should likewise underpin current devotional and liturgical uses of images.⁹² In the closing stages of Part 2 of the *Repressor*, Pecock thus returns the reader to contemporary liturgical performances involving images and touch (those which cause Lollards to feel ‘out of eese’) with a reformed understanding of their value: the process of making Christ present in the imagination in order to love Him wholeheartedly must be matched in external action and is completed in touch.

Liturgical performances such as the Palm Sunday procession and Good Friday creeping to the Cross are, of course, collective instances of remembrance that aim at a kind of making

⁹¹ *On the Properties of Things*, I, 119.

⁹² On liturgical use of images, see further Marks, *Image and Devotion*, e.g. pp. 160-1.

present even while they might embody (and even, as Amy Knight Powell suggests, prefigure) absence.⁹³ In the Palm Sunday procession, re-presenting Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the sacrament – the real presence of Christ in the form of bread and wine – is processed outside and then brought into the church. As Eamon Duffy describes:

The clergy and people entered the church, passing under the shrine with the Sacrament, and then the whole procession moved to its culminating point before the Rood-screen. All through Lent a great painted veil had been suspended in front of the Crucifix on the Rood-screen. This veil was now drawn up on pulleys, the whole parish knelt, and the anthem "Ave Rex Noster" was sung, while the clergy venerated the cross by kissing the ground.⁹⁴

On Good Friday, commemorating Christ's Passion, a Crucifix is unveiled (this time, in three stages), culminating in the custom of creeping to it: as Duffy describes, 'Clergy and people then crept barefoot and on their knees to kiss the foot of the cross'. Afterwards, the consecrated Host is symbolically 'buried' in the Easter sepulchre.⁹⁵ Deposition rites associated with Holy Week, as Powell describes, sometimes also used an articulated Christ with moving body parts to re-enact His burial.⁹⁶ Scholars have thoroughly documented the ways in which three-dimensional images are thus used, along with the material space and fabric of a church, to emphasise visual spectacle

⁹³ On the role of the liturgy in collective remembrance and making present, see further Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, and *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); on the idea of absence in medieval Deposition images and their prefiguration of Reformation iconoclasm, see Powell, *Depositions*. On paraliturgical performances, such as plays, and presence, see further Sarah Beckwith, 'Absent Presences: The Theatre of Resurrection in York', *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. David Aers (Brewer: Cambridge, 2000), pp. 185-205 (e.g. p. 185).

⁹⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 25.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁹⁶ On such moving Christs, see Powell, *Depositions*; Laura Varnam, 'The Crucifix, the Pietà, and the Female Mystic: Devotional Objects and Performative Identity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 41.2 (2015), 208-37.

in liturgical performance in the medieval period.⁹⁷ More recent scholarship has begun to recognise the ways in which even objects seen in this context also operate in conjunction with haptic experience. Jacqueline E. Jung and Joanne E. Ziegler, for example, find (respectively) that devotional engagements with rood screens and *Pietà* sculptures should be understood in a tactile frame.⁹⁸ But material objects situated in churches, more than just appealing to a sense of touch, also invite literal acts of touching. As Caroline Walker Bynum highlights, devotional objects were often constructed precisely to ‘call attention to their materiality by means both obvious and subtle’: some were thus designed in such a way as to ‘impel...viewers to experience greater tactility as they penetrated to deeper soteriological truth’; others, however, explicitly ‘enjoined the worshipper to kiss them’.⁹⁹

The explicit invitation made in the context of the liturgy to touch images is in part so objectional to Lollards, as Pecock summarises, because in so doing people ‘beren hem silf and gourene hem silf as thei wolden bere hem and gouerne hem, if thilk thing were God hem silf’; indeed, if God were Himself visibly present, they could not make ‘meker or lou3er [lower, humbler] or deuouter submission’.¹⁰⁰ For Pecock, however, this is precisely the point. Since contiguity between imagination’s images and physical ones results in an approximation of Christ’s presence – He is, in some way, really present – then the desire to touch mouth, eye and

⁹⁷ On traditional emphasis on the visual in scholarship, see Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform*, p. 167; Suzannah Biernoff, ‘Carnal Relations: Embodied Sight in Merleau-Ponty, Roger Bacon and St Francis’, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 4.1 (2005), 39-52 e.g. at p. 40. Liz James, “‘Seeing is believing, but feeling’s the truth’: Touch and the Meaning of Byzantine Art”, notes: ‘Scholars tend to treat religious services as essentially visual elements in which congregations function as spectators...Worship, however, is a participatory act and so touch plays as great a role as vision’, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Jacqueline E. Jung, ‘The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in the Medieval Religious Imagination’, *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, 2010), pp. 203-40; Joanna E. Ziegler, *Sculpture of Compassion: The Pietà and the Beguines in the Southern Low Countries c1300-c1600* (Brussels: Brepols, 1992), e.g. p. 64. See also the essays collected in *Sculpture and Touch*, ed. Peter Dent (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014) for the long tradition associated sculpture with touch.

⁹⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ *Repressor*, p. 202.

hand to that of the physical image logically follows. If a reader thus finds friendship a persuasive paradigm for legitimising looking at images of Christ, so too, Pecoock argues, will it justify touching images of Him.

Imagine, Pecoock urges his reader, Christ were walking on earth in a great crowd of people,

and thou my³tist come so ny³ that thou schuldist touche with thin hond hise feet or his hond his breste or his cheke or hise clothis, and woldist therbi gendre to thee bi so myche the more affeccioun anentis him than if thou my³tist not so touche him or his clothing, (euen ri³t as we han experience that oon persoon gendrith more loue to an other, if he biclippe him in armys, than he schulde, if he not come so ny³ to him and not biclippid him,)—it muste nedis folewe, if thou ymagine Crist or an other Seint for to be bodili strei³t thorou³out the bodi of the ymage, that thou schalt gendre, gete, and haue bi so miche the more good affeccioun to God or to the Seint, that thou dost to him touching him in the ymage as bi ymaginacioun.¹⁰¹

Thomas emphasises in the *Summa*: ‘charity grows, not by one charity being added to another, but by being intensified in its subject’.¹⁰² Here, Pecoock reminds us yet again that such intensification of charity is most profoundly achieved in touch: a person engenders more love for another if he ‘biclippe [embrace] him in armys’ than if he merely sees him. In emphasising the connection of touch and love (and so, by extension, of touch and *caritas*), Pecoock suppresses other reasons to touch images, such as healing or to obtain holy properties or virtues.¹⁰³ More particularly, Pecoock’s ‘imagine this’ instance recalls the Gospel account of the woman suffering a ‘flux of blood’, who, standing in a crowd, dares to reach out and touch the hem of Christ’s clothing in

¹⁰¹ *Repressor*, p. 271.

¹⁰² *Summa theologiae*, see 2a2æ.24, 5 (Gilby, XXXIV, 48-9).

¹⁰³ See further on touch’s transformative potential, for example, C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 29.

the hope that she might be healed.¹⁰⁴ The healing potential of touching Christ's clothes (via an image of Christ) is here sidestepped. Instead, Pecock stresses again the proximity necessary to the energy of friendship. Acknowledging that Christ's presence *would* generate a desire to touch Him leads us to accept that the perception of presence (achieved through the process of mapping an interior image onto an exterior one) would likewise make us want to reach out and touch the physical representation. So important and so natural is this point for Pecock that he makes recourse not to one but three further illustrations from the paradigm of friendship, each of which is compelling in its affective charge.

First comes Pecock's boldest analogy: with the desire of those who love each other to be joined as one. Pecock invokes this analogy following on from the example of friendship being maintained at a distance and in absence through intermediaries:

thou woldist be weel plesid, if thi freend, whom thou louest and which loueth thee,
wolde sende to the a cosse [kiss] or an handling or a biclipping or eny other bodili
touching bi a meene persoon receyuyng thilk cosse, handling, biclipping, or othere
touching of him immediatli, and delyueryng to thee as fro him mediatli.

Just as a man derives pleasure from receiving a kiss, an embrace or another bodily touch 'bi a meene person', who first receives it and then delivers it 'mediatli', so too is it 'coueitable', Pecock argues, for a man to obtain through an image a touch (with his face, eyes or mouth) of the feet, mouth, hand or breast of Christ. The use of the material image as a proxy for physical presence is thus explained as natural:

namelich sithen the nature of loue bitwixe persones [is] forto be a moving in to oonyng
and ioynyng tho persoones to gidere, in so miche that if tho persoones misten make
euereither of hem forto entre into the ful hool person of the other of hem and forto be

¹⁰⁴ The account is given in Matthew 9, Mark 5 and Luke 8.

streist thoru3 out the bodi or person of the other of hem, than were had a greet entent and purpos into which her loue enclyneth.¹⁰⁵

By this point in the imaginative process that makes the external image contiguous with the imagined Christ we have moved far from mapping or stretching and far from optical lines, into a physical overlaying and ‘entering into’ of bodies: love for another inclines one to desire to touch and to match – more than this, collapse – every part of one’s own body into the other’s.¹⁰⁶

With this powerful example, a reader might ask why Pecock thought two more were necessary. He next sketches a profoundly beautiful instance from the friendship paradigm of parent and child: ‘if a man loue a child,’ he notes, ‘he wole sette his cheke to the cheke of the child, his i3e to the childis i3e, his forhede to the childis forhede, his nose to the childis nose, and therbi the more loue is gendrid anentis the child’. Through this example, I suggest, Pecock seeks both to assert the naturalness of the desire to touch and to cut off the potentially dangerous suggestion of the erotic in his assertion that the love between friends, as modelled in medieval accounts of spiritual friendship, inclines them to union. Such distancing is underscored in Pecock’s final example that comes from the paradigm of the lord and servant: is it not also the case, he asks, that a man who is loved particularly by a lord ‘mai be admyttid for to come so ny3 that he lie with the lord in oon bed? And if he mai not be admyttid into so greet ny3nes, 3it if he mai be admittid for to ligge in the same chambir with the lord, certis therbi schal good loue and affeccioun be gendrid’. With this last excessive example, Pecock thus seems to hope (though we might judge that he fails) to rein in the excess of affect that his insistence on the validity of touching an image of Christ has provoked. If the desire for presence experienced through touch is universal to love in all its forms, as is implied by Pecock’s examples taken from the friendship

¹⁰⁵ *Repressor*, pp. 271-2. On the role in Thomas’s account of the apprehension of species in effecting a union between those who love each other, *Summa theologiae*, 1a2æ.28.

¹⁰⁶ Here Pecock seems to be drawing on the notion of the friend as another self, developed in monastic traditions of spiritual friendship, rather than sexual union, though this too is a possible interpretation. On the friend as a another self in monastic traditions, see Krahmer, “The Friend as a “Second Self””.

of lord and servant, of father and child and between equals, then meeting the difficult demands of *caritas* might also legitimately require it.

Pecock's sustained engagement with the figure of the absent friend in his defence of the use of images in the *Repressor* thus very clearly shows that what is at stake (for him) is the problem Christ's absence causes for sensory perception and for imagination. In pursuing the logic of friendship with Christ, Pecock shows the debate about images not only to be about vision, or about ways of seeing, but also about touch, and about the imaginative practices that should engage these sensory processes. In his insistent return to the imaginative process in which Christ is 'streizt thoruzout the bodi of the ymage', Pecock establishes not only a sense of touch but an actual experience of touch as the grounds for approximating presence. Since Christ is absent, imagining touching Him is the next best thing to His real presence, but imagination (under the feeble conditions of the human mind) needs physical images. If, when viewing and simultaneously touching an image, a man maps the imagined image onto the physical one, the sense of touch gives real solidity to imagining – making vividly present Christ the friend.